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Soviet Union Eastern Europe

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172

October 9, 1975
No. 0765/75

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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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The Difficult Side of Honecker's Moscow Trip

Although the new friendship treaty with the Soviets provided the gloss on the current, visit of top level East Germans to Moscow, the Honecker delegation anticipated hard bargaining over bilateral economic problems and matters of defense and security [REDACTED]

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The Soviet decision early this year to increase raw materials prices had reportedly upset East German economic planning. As a result bilateral economic talks had concentrated on this issue for several months. If the Soviets failed to make price concessions, [REDACTED] the Honecker regime would have to alter its economic policies in order to maintain the standard of living and to prevent economic stagnation. [REDACTED] such a policy could mean either abandonment of price stability or closer cooperation with capitalist states.

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A shift would also place party chief Honecker in an awkward situation. During the 15th party plenum on October 2-3, Honecker had stressed that the regime would continue its consumer-oriented policies, and had referred to the impending 9th congress as a "milestone for our social development."

East Germany may have to turn to the West for economic assistance. [REDACTED]

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25X1C [REDACTED] the Soviets are press-
ing East Berlin for a larger contribution to the

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Warsaw Pact defense effort, including bearing more of the cost of stationing Soviet forces in East Germany. If East Berlin cannot do this, Moscow wants the East Germans to increase the size of their defense establishment, thus permitting a corresponding reduction in Soviet forces in the country. The East German leadership has tried to counter the Soviet position by citing the nation's economic burdens and obligations to the USSR. The US embassy in Moscow has also picked up reports that there have been differences over the troop question in recent Soviet - East German discussions.

The regime is clearly caught in a squeeze. Given its shortage of manpower, East Germany would be hard pressed to expand its defense commitments significantly without depleting the labor pool and further weakening its economy. On the other hand, the Honecker leadership relies on the continued presence of Soviet forces in East Germany for domestic security, which it evidently believes will be no easier to maintain after the Helsinki summit.

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Soviet Nonconformists Go on Busman's Holiday

Nonconformist artists from Moscow and Leningrad, happy but tired after their recent, successful exhibits, are going to Soviet Georgia for two or three weeks of vacation. While there, however, they will try to put on a joint show in Tbilisi with some of their Georgian colleagues. Since officials in Moscow and Leningrad made a point of limiting the shows there to local artists, the prospects for approval of an inter-city exhibit are small, but the artists say it is worth a try.

A group of some 30 nonconformists from Moscow, Leningrad, and the Baltic republics are slated to leave for Georgia on October 10. Meanwhile, their Georgian counterparts reportedly are trying to get official permission for a joint, week- or ten-day exhibit, opening about October 18. If approval is granted, the visiting artists will send for their paintings--about five from each artist--and give a boost to what all hope will be the first show of nonconformist art in Georgia.

Apart from Moscow, Leningrad, and the more Western-oriented Baltic capitals--especially Estonia's Tallin--Tbilisi in Georgia and Yerevan in Armenia contain the only significant concentrations of nonconformist--some say nationalist--artists in the USSR. The artists reportedly chose Tbilisi over Yerevan for their attempt because the unofficial art community there is reputed to have better relations with the municipal authorities. The timing--immediately after the two Russian shows--was picked so as to permit the Georgian artists, and for that matter the city officials, to appeal to the precedent set in Moscow and Leningrad. By not bringing their canvases with them immediately,

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the visitors hope to keep their hosts out of trouble should the Tbilisi city fathers turn down the exhibit. In that event, the artists say, they are set to enjoy a rest in "sunny Georgia." (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Ukrainian Party Boss
Discloses Harvest Shortfall

The Soviets waited four days before publishing an expanded version of a speech by Ukrainian party boss Shcherbitsky that gave relatively precise indications of the shortfall in this year's Ukrainian grain harvest. The delay plus Shcherbitsky's defensive treatment of the subject seem to reflect concern that harvest difficulties risk becoming an explosive issue in pre-party congress politicking. Shcherbitsky may fear that not only he, but his patron Brezhnev--the leading spokesman for Soviet agricultural policy--will come under criticism for the harvest failure. By broaching the matter himself, he probably hopes to head this off.

Speaking at the conclusion of a republic party meeting in the Ukraine--one of the major grain producing areas--Shcherbitsky said that the 1975 grain harvest was below expectations because of extremely unfavorable weather. Nevertheless, he stated, "the gross grain harvest this year will exceed the average annual harvest in the last five-year plan period (1966-70) and will be significantly more than in 1972." This works out to a harvest of about 34 million tons, or approximately 14 to 15 million tons under the planned goal set for this year. Shcherbitsky is the first high-level Soviet official to reveal publicly any specific details on the extent of this year's harvest shortfall.

Shcherbitsky then went on to call for a "correct approach" in appraising the harvest results. He sought to absolve the party leadership and its program, saying that the "enormous work done by our party and the achievements in implementing the party's agricultural policy must not be belittled."

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Bulgarians Admonished to Maintain Orthodoxy

The Bulgarian party faithful have been warned against any relaxation of ideological vigilance in the post-Helsinki period. Writing in the official party organ on September 29, Lydumila Zhivkova--Minister of Art and Culture--noted that the party will face "certain difficulties" in the period ahead. There will be "some tendencies," she stressed, to propagandize "bourgeois influence... anticomunist concepts and tendencies like violence, racism, discrimination, pornography...."

Zhivkova's remarks are consistent with the rigid orthodoxy of the Bulgarian regime. It is the timing of the publication that is significant. Lydumila, who is party chief Zhivkov's daughter and appears to enjoy growing prominence in government and party circles, had just returned from the Bucharest conference of socialist ministers of culture. Moreover, US Deputy Secretary Ingersoll--the highest ranking US official ever to visit the country--had only recently left Sofia, where he had been received by top Bulgarian leaders. Zhivkov, who has been giving increasing priority to improving relations with the US and gaining access to much needed Western technology, is keenly aware of the accompanying necessity to increase political discipline at home. This effort to sharpen the party's ideological awareness during the East-West detente era is likely to grow as Bulgaria approaches its 11th party congress in March 1976. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Yugoslavs and Bulgarians
To Examine Macedonian Issue

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[REDACTED]
the Yugoslav and Bulgarian regimes have agreed to convene a joint meeting of scholars to recommend ways to defuse the tangled Macedonian issue.

The inspiration for this venture reportedly came during a meeting between party leaders Tito and Zhivkov at the Helsinki summit. Since the CSCE session, the Yugoslav polemic against Sofia's refusal to distinguish between a Macedonian minority and the Bulgarian majority has slackened.

While joint efforts are a step forward, it is doubtful that the two sides will manage to do much more than settle the dust for a brief time. The spirit of the Tito-Zhivkov talks in Helsinki could founder rather quickly if the Bulgarians proceed with a planned census that omits a category for "Macedonians." Yugoslav Macedonians view the census as an indirect Bulgarian challenge to their nationhood and, ultimately, to their territorial integrity. The Yugoslavs would have little or no room for compromise without prompting charges that Belgrade is selling out the interests of the smaller minorities--a serious matter in multi-national Yugoslavia.

Even if Sofia defers the census, a host of other issues remain outstanding. Among them are jointly claimed cultural heroes, explanations of the "liberation" of Yugoslav Macedonia during the war, and linguistic claims. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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